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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching is to recognize and enhance teaching as an art and as a profession, by providing career school teachers with opportunities to study advanced topics in the sciences, arts, and humanities, to engage in informed discourse, and otherwise to pursue scholarly interest. The Center serves teachers from every grade and subject, and from every area of the state through interdisciplinary seminars. The long-range objectives of the Center are to reward excellence in teaching, provide an opportunity for intellectual renewal, and retain outstanding teachers. The program at the Center concentrates on the personal and intellectual renewal of teachers through seminars, support of teacher-initiated research and artistic production, and the development of a statewide colleague network. Descriptions are given of several seminars, illustrating how the Center's objectives of encouraging the intellectual growth of the participants are being met and extended. (JD)

# Developing Teacher Knowledge for Professional Renewal:

## A State Professional Development Perspective



Anthony G. Rud Jr

The North Carolina Center

for the Advancement of Teaching

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Anthony G. Rud Jr.
The North Carolina Center for
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Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988

## I Introduction

North Carolina's state legislature recently funded the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, operating at Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, under the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. The Center's purpose is to "recognize and enhance teaching as an art and as a profession, by providing career school teachers with opportunities to study advanced topics in the sciences, arts, and humanities, to engage in informed discourse, and otherwise to pursue scholarly interests" (Board of Governors, 1985). Now in its second year of full time operation, the Center serves teachers from every grade and subject, and from every area of North Carolina through interdisciplinary seminars. The long range objectives of the Center are to reward excellence in teaching, provide an opportunity for intellectual renewal, and to retain outstanding teachers in the field through programs for up to 2000 teachers per year.

We concentrate upon the personal and intellectual renewal of teachers through challenging interdisciplinary seminars, support of teacher initiated research and artistic production, and the development of a statewide colleague network. I would like to review some of the earliest documents of the Center to get a

grasp on the core ideas behind our work, and then to examine several seminars to show how these ideas have been made concrete, and how teachers' knowledge has been enhanced.

II A Place for Intellectual and Personal Renewal

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching represents a bold new approach to building and maintaining a cadre of excellent teachers in North Carolina schools. By providing year-round in-residence learning and study opportunities for outstanding career teachers of all grade levels and disciplines, the Center serves as a symbol of the value that North Carolina citizens attach to excellence in teaching.

The need for a different approach to rewarding and enhancing excellent teachers became apparent during the statewide hearings of Governor Hunt's Commission on Education for Economic Growth in 1983. Noting that North Carolina's economic future depends on the quality of education in the public schools, the Commission concluded that there should be a focal point in the state for the intellectual development of exemplary career teachers. Members reasoned that the opportunities for scholarly growth available through such a center would help to attract first-rate people to the teaching profession and encourage the most intellectually able teachers to stay in the schools.

Jean Paul Powell, a former state teacher of the year, planted the idea of a center just for teachers with her impassioned testimony before the Commission:

'To attract and retain the best in education, we must find a

way to enhance the teacher's sense of self-worth, her pride of accomplishment, and her enthusiasm. We have a governor's school for gifted students. Why not something similar for teachers? We don't need more educational methodology or the latest curriculum fads. We'd like to study the "real stuff." What about going to summer school for 1 or 2 weeks, or even 4 to 6 weeks, to study some of the great books: Plato, Homer, Vergil, Shakespeare, and others? Include the opportunity to visit an art gallery, see live performances of Shakespeare's plays along with videotapes and films, with outside reading and even writing critical commentaries. If that kind of learning experience doesn't turn on teachers in the humanities, I don't know what will. That excitement will be communicated to students. Furthermore, being a student will give a teacher a renewed perspective of the student's role" (Powell, 1983).

The concept for a center for the professional and personal renewal of public school teachers took further shape under the interim leadership during the two summers of carefully piloted and assessed programs that preceded the start of full-time operation in the fall of 1986. The interim director, Gurney Chambers, stressed the need for time for reflection away from the distractions of the classroom: "The Center should be a sanctuary where harried teachers can pause for reflection...When teachers are able to avoid the progressive loss of energy, enthusiasm, and purpose that frequently results from uninterrupted teaching, everybody - citizens, students, and teachers - is a winner...Put

succinctly, the Center must be bookish and reflective in nature rather than hands-on and hurried. The tyranny of immediacy and superficiality which inevitably prevails in the elementary and secondary school must be taboo at the Center" (1984). Both Powell and Chambers saw intense intellectual stimulation coupled with a relaxed and supportive atmosphere as the proper core for a teacher center.

I would like to describe several seminars to show how these ideas of the Center's early advocates have been met and extended. Early on in our planning for the first (1986-87) full year of programs, we devised a "template" that would allow us to make concrete some of these initial ideas (See Appendix 1). We were unanimous in our desire to have the seminar room be a place for highly interactive learning among diverse people, and we consciously tried to stay away from the lectern and overhead projector "visiting expert," particularly since we were aware of flat and unproductive sessions led by nationally recognized figures in the pilot programs. Many of the seminars we have had offered a mix of formal presentations, small group socratic discussion, and large chunks of time for independent study, reflection, and relaxation. "The Blue Ridge Experience" combined presentations in history, geology, and paleo-ecology with several nights at the Tremont Environmental Education Center in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for hiking, observations of folk crafts, story-telling, and mountain music. Goethe's Italian Journey, his notes on a trip he made when he was the age of many

of our teachers, and Mozart's Magic Flute provided the core for a seminar on the 18th century entitled "The Pursuit of Happiness." Discussion leaders focused on the place of aesthetic experience in adult life, and how art can help anchor one's adult identity.

Another theme addressed regularly in our seminars is a continued exploration of what educated discourse is. Sadly enough, many of our teachers tell us that faculty at the center are the first people to listen to what they say, and to argue with them. Many of our teachers never experienced the type of vigorous classroom discussion taken for granted at most liberal arts colleges. Several of our seminars have explicitly been shaped by the style and content of the discipline of philosophy. In "Dax's Case: The Value of Life," participants spent several days reflecting upon the life of Donald "Dax" Cowart. Cowart, an unwilling survivor of massive third degree burns, presents his arguments for the right to die in a well-known case study in medical ethics that probes deep medical, ethical, religious, and legal issues. Discussion leaders included philosophers, psychologists, doctors, and lawyers. One of the ancillary themes of the seminar was the nature of professional judgement: as the teacher-participants wrestled with how doctors, lawyers, and other "professionals" argued the case, they could come to begin to formulate what might be called the professional judgement of teachers.

Our hope for the program here at NCCAT is that our interdisciplinary seminars will reawaken or nurture what Bruce McPherson calls the "heart of the mind," that passionate intellect that we

believe lies at the core of what is valuable for a teacher (1987). We were all more than a bit skeptical that a four or five day residence at the center, or even a semester scholar in residence stint, could accomplish our goal. The life of the mind is subtle, and any attempt to "jump-start" or "quick-fix" it is doomed to failure, so we surmised. Yet we have been repeatedly surprised by the depth of the effect of our seminars upon participants over time (see Appendix 2 for teacher testimonials).

We have since reasoned that what Benjamin Bloom (1981) calls a "peak learning experience," a powerful and memorable "moment of truth" that can affect the course of one's life and education, may indeed occur for some of our participants with a higher degree of regularity than in everyday life and schooling (I am indebted to Walter Oldendorf for this insight). Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision in the kitchen of his Montgomery home early on in his involvement in the struggle for civil rights gave him strength to continue his work despite his repeated feelings of ambivalence about being the leader of that movement (Garrow, 1986). On a smaller, less world-historical, though no less important stage, many of our participants have experienced similar such moments that have continued to inform and nourish their minds long after they leave the mountains.

We do hope that what we offer in our seminars will lead consistently to a renewed intellectual life after the participants leave Cullowhee. This happened dramatically last winter in a seminar called "Humans and the Cosmos," led by physicists

James Trefil, now at George Mason University, and Stephen Reynolds, of North Carolina State University. The participants emerged from several days of discussing Renaissance and modern astronomy to demand that the faculty provide more background information on mathematics and physics. This led to a teacher initiated study group that is independently investigating the nature of literacy in the physical sciences and has already conducted a follow-up seminar. At that time, teachers did hands-on experiments in physics, discussed the scientific principles involved, and compiled the necessary terms and definitions needed for literacy in the physical sciences by all K-12 teachers. Several more follow-ups have been planned that are independent of Center programs, and participants will continue to explore their newfound or reawakened interest in science.

As our program unfolded over our first year of full-time operation, we saw that, in addition to offering our teachers opportunities for intellectual and personal renewal and treating them with care and respect, something equally as precious became an important component of a seminar: unstructured blocks of time to be used solely for their own personal and professional benefit. We purposely built into every seminar time away from the seminar table. When, in a conversation one morning during a coffee break, a teacher remarked that she just liked to have the time to lie in bed and read, we decided to implement our series of "teacher-scholar in residence" programs. We had long thought of doing this series, with our initial inspiration coming out of

the practice of various writers' colonies, such as Yaddo in New York and MacDowell in New Hampshire, and the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. After teachers submit a proposal for independent study, we provide a week of free time punctuated only by communal meals, brief voluntary sessions on publishing and grantsmanship, and light evening entertainment. One participant showed me her daily schedule; it began before seven a.m. and continued late into the evening as she banged out the pages of a novel on one of our computers. In this manner, we have provided the space and support for teachers to step away from often harried personal and professional lives and think and create over a sustained uninterrupted period of time. Our first groups of teacher-scholars have actively enhanced their own knowledge and enriched their own lives and those of others (See Appendix 2, final testimony).

One of the most rapidly expanding areas of concern for Center leadership is alumni activities and continued renewal. The need for a strong colleague network to further the work of Center seminars was noted early on in the pilot sessions by our outside evaluation team, W.W. Cooley and W.E. Bickel of the Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh. In their preliminary report (Cooley and Bickel, 1985) they write that "One theme that emerged...was participant interest in keeping in touch with colleagues met at the Center, and with the evolving Center program itself" and later they close the report by stating that "The encouragement of continued

contact and professional exchange among Center alumni as that number grows offers an important dimension for extending and sustaining the impact of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching." We have implemented a number of activities that allow alumni/ae to remain in contact with the Center: a newsletter, reunion seminars in the three geographic regions of the state, alumni assistants at the seminars, and so forth. But we realize that more needs to be done to strengthen and maintain the colleague network across the state that has grown by over seven hundred members in the past year alone. We have begun to explore how we might empower alumni at the county or "county cluster" level, and have drawn some inspiration from the Swedish system of "study circles," where adults in Sweden can continue their education in voluntary, government subsidized discussion groups. We are experimenting with a plan where a committee of alumni would devise one-day programs that would resemble Cullowhee seminars in some ways (discussion of a challenging topic with a seminar leader who has expertise in that area) and NCCAT would provide for all costs involved.

Another way we have begun to expand our activities has been through work with individual districts or counties. Since the core of our work is an interdisciplinary seminar format for heterogenous groups of teachers from across the state, our single district or county efforts have been few but important. In the fall of 1987, we sponsored a weekend workshop for the evaluation advisory committee of the Wake County Schools. Wake County is

one of the fastest growing school districts in the nation and includes the state capital, Raleigh. I devised a program that would help them begin to think about knowledge based performance evaluation. The planning group carefully studied the work of the Stanford team and others as they developed a plan to evaluate their teachers. Our staff learned some important lessons that weekend as we observed the intensity of the group's devotion to a product, namely a new evaluation scheme. Our seminar this fall entitled "A Quilt in Time" will focus on the production of a simple quilt by a group of veteran teachers and a group of novice teachers. As the quilt is assembled in its final stages, veteran teachers will share the lessons of a lifetime of teaching, while the novice teachers may ask the veterans questions born of their newness and innocence of the art of teaching.

III Knowledge for Freedom

Before full time operation began at NCCAT, the core residential faculty of Center Fellows composed a rationale for the Center's work. We stated that we believe that the broadest purpose of the Center is to increase freedom for teachers through the knowledge gained in study and informed discourse. As Lee Shulman notes (1986), recent trends in teacher training and certification have steadily decreased the amount of professional freedom enjoyed by teachers. Behaviorally oriented training programs and curricular objectives produce predictable outcomes, but diminish teaching as a profession. Teaching as a profession implies mastery not only of performance and procedure, but also

of content and rationale; the teacher is professional in the use of reasoned judgement rather than the display of prescribed behavior. We believe that promising teachers leave the field not only because of low pay, poor working conditions, or low status, but perhaps more importantly because of a decreasing amount of freedom to act as a professional. As Sizer (1984) and others note, there are overwhelming demands on the time and energies of our teachers. These demands too often inhibit intellectual growth and renewal. Our vision is that the Center can help to reverse these trends.

One of the earliest influences upon our work at the center in developing this vision and formulating a theory to govern our work was Shulman's AERA presidential address, "Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching" (1986). Shulman's team at Stanford set out to describe the peculiar type of knowledge shown by expert teachers, which they call "pedagogical content knowledge." This is the type of expertise shown by the teacher "wise in practice" when teaching Moby Dick to a particular group of students; that teacher will adjust her presentation and discussion to the needs of the students, while remaining faithful to an interpretation of the text. This is the crucial knowledge of a teacher, beyond the first level of knowledge of subject matter, and is the basis for the Stanford team's much publicized "wisdom of practice" studies.

At NCCAT we work with those teachers who could be the object of "wisdom of practice" studies, since our participants are exem-

plary teachers who have worked full-time in the classroom for at least three years. Yet we have come to notice that what Walter Oldendorf has described as an "overarching" quality of intellect is more decisive for our work and for the free individuals that we are attempting to allow our teachers to be. Oldendorf describes the excellent teacher in the following manner: "The excellent teacher has a keen interest in learning that is infectious. The excellent teacher is curious, and helps others to be curious as well. The excellent teacher helps us to realize that the world is full of conflict and ambiguity...but more importantly the excellent teacher helps us to know how to find the better answers to the difficult questions. Finally, the excellent teacher has the ability to help us integrate our understandings of complexities of the world, to find common threads, and to interpret and give meaning to our knowledge and experience" (1987). Our work at NCCAT has been guided by the unstated maxim that the overarching and passionate intellect is the necessary condition for excellent teaching. Like Spinoza's substance, this "substance" of excellent teaching provides the heart for any further attributes, talents, or wise practices.

We believe that to be effective in enhancing a teacher's intellectual growth within the time constraints of the seminars, the Center Fellows and staff must focus on certain critical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning:

1. Each seminar must in some way examine the nature of knowledge as it is understood in the modern sciences, humanities,

and the arts. Through the seminars teachers will be encouraged to recognize that every field has within itself divergent viewpoints on what constitutes knowledge, and that education itself is no exception to this generalization. In examining the multiple paths to knowledge, participants will also be able to develop the skills of analytic thinking by distinguishing among various points of view. Consequently, our programs should seek to assemble participants representing multiple points of view, thereby encouraging the need for integration and synthesis; each group will be diverse in geography, age, and academic discipline.

2. The Center should present topics of an interdisciplinary nature, unlikely to be available in textbooks or to be confined to a single academic field. In this way participants will be encouraged to interpret information from a variety of perspectives using a variety of paradigms. A similar method will be used in seminars in which a familiar topic will be examined using new methodologies or in light of new questions. The basic change in history from asking "What happened?" to asking "What happened to whom?" is an example of how a seminar might be focused to show that the type of questions asked can actually shape the nature of the discipline.

3. Recent research into the nature of intellectual development indicates that learning can occur in at least two ways. First, we can all learn new facts, principles, and generalizations that fit in with our existing intellectual structures, or ways of perceiving the world. Secondly, we are all capable of

developing new intellectual structures that are more comprehensive and adequate in understanding the world. Piaget called the first "learning in the narrow sense," and the second "intellectual development." The Center is primarily concerned with intellectual development, and in accord with that concern will attempt to ensure that seminars include experiences that create opportunities for reflective critical thinking. That is not to say that one does not learn facts or generalizations while developing new intellectual structures. The delight in learning, where the whole world is an object for contemplation and mastery, is part of intellectual development, as new structures demand components.

Let me unpack this a bit. Part of our effort, with us since the early documents of the center (particularly the fellows' rationale, from which this discussion is taken) has been to widen the epistemological net of our participants. Many of our teachers come to the center with what might be called a "pre-philosophical" or "pre-reflective" stance toward the world. This stance is partially characterized by the following: science describes the world as it really is and thus its pursuit is a value-free, uncontroversial, and incremental task of slowly but surely filling in the details of the world "out there;" and ideas concerning what to value are matters of personal concern only, or are decided by an appeal to authority, and are therefore not proper subjects for discussion or reflection. Through our seminars, we try to bring participants to the point where they

can loosen their grip on these and other tenets, and realize that there are many paths to knowledge, and that there is deep disagreement in all fields, born of the vitality of inquiry. We are naturally situated in the Smoky Mountains to be able to try to accomplish some of these ends: the mountaintop is a common enough metaphor in religious and philosophical literature for a disengagement from and reflection upon everyday life, and many of our teachers see our location in just this fashion.

By bringing together heterogenous groups of twenty teachers, we are able to instantly form what Matthew Lipman calls a "community of inquiry." With the proper cues from staff and presenters as detailed in our "Taxonomy of NCCAT Thinking Skills and Dispositions" (see Appendix 3) our participants are able to learn from each other, while developing the crucial skill of listening to an opposing viewpoint, formulating a response, and defending that response by marshaling evidence in a well-formed argument. This takes practice, but if encouraged by a facilitator, participants can begin to realize something that is precious and rare in the life of the mind: the elation that comes from the discussion of opposing viewpoints in an atmosphere of attention, trust, curiosity, and fellow-feeling.

4. Follow-up of the seminar experiences is essential if they are to have any lasting effect. Each seminar closes with a session devoted to the implications of the discussion for the intellectual lives of the participants. Networks of seminar alumni have been established to further communication among

alumni, and to encourage mutual support in the life of the intellect. Periodic reunions have been arranged to further continue and support the work of the seminars.

5. The resident faculty of Center Fellows and the seminar presenters should exemplify the best in teaching. We take very seriously the motto "The Teacher as Learner," and believe that the best preparation for outstanding teaching is engagement in wide ranging research, writing, artistic production, and a sharing and appreciation of each other's work. The fellows, actively engaged in learning, will be able to share with participants the fruits of their reading and artistry and how this shapes their teaching, and the role of their professional associations in the encouragement and dissemination of knowledge. We had initially believed that the fellows, in their teaching at the center, should articulate the relevance of the disciplines to teaching and the school. We now believe that this is not necessary, and may indeed be harmful to the intellectually intense yet emotionally supportive atmosphere that has characterized our best seminars. Our seminars allow participants to take intellectual and personal risks as they explore areas that may be foreign to them. We do not provide instruction in pedagogy; rather, in modeling the best in seminar teaching and collegial management, we hope that our participants will take away our own "hidden curriculum," and thus improve their lives, their classrooms, and their schools (cf. Prakash and Waks, 1985). We hope to encourage seminar participants to devise their own research projects, to

become active in professional associations, and to view the creation of academic knowledge and the enhancement of artistic production as an ongoing process. We hope that the curiosity and zest for learning of the Center faculty will be transmitted to teachers, and thereby to the students of North Carolina. As Richard Berendzen, president of the American University, pointed out in our first 1986 seminar, the most eminent scientists retain the curious questioning attitude of a ten year old child. Let such thinkers, at once learned and eager for more knowledge, be the models for our teachers and students.

## APPENDIX 1

## NCCAT Seminar Planning Template

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TARGET GROUP | K-12 | K-6 | 5-8 | 7-9 | 10-12 | 9-12 | |
| | All Teachers | Humanities/ Social Science | Math/Science | Arts | Special Education | By Topic | |
| | | 3-5 years experience | 5-10 years | 10-15 years | 15-20 years | +20 years | |
| FACILITATORS | Outside | NC | Fellows System | UNC | WCU | NC Teacher | National Figure |
| FIELD | Academic | Business | Politics | Planner | Inventor | Scientist | |
| | Artist | Musician | Community Leader | Athlete | Writer | | |
| SEX | M | F | | | | | |
| RACE | Black | Hispanic | Caucasian | Native American | Asian | | |

| TOPICS | Great Books | Leadership | Science | Arts | Regional | Public Policy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Education | Changing Roles | Economics | Environmental | Value Issues | | |
| FORMAT | 1 day | 1 week | Extended Weekend | Full year | Split season | Full summer | Semester |
| SITE | WCU | Other UNC | School site | Other | NC | Out of State | International |
| COGNITIVE/ AFFECTIVE | Provocative Presentation | Remarks & Queries | Discussion | Group Exercise | Self-Investigation | | |
| ACTIVITIES | Attentive Listening | Speaking | Writing | Group Games | Physical Activities | | |
| GROUP INDIVIDUAL | All Together | Mainly Together | Group/ Individual | Mainly Independent | All Independent | | |

(Dr. Jon Rinnander, NCCAT, 9/86)

APPENDIX 2: Teacher Testimonials.

These comments from our files illustrate how some NCCAT participants have viewed their time with us. Betty Hunt's emphasis upon the intellectual nature of the experience, combined with collegial bonding, is typical of many of our participants.

> First of all, thank you for your part in providing me . . . with a truly exceptional week. On both a personal and a professional level, this experience was unlike any other that I have known. I have never been so stimulated and had so much fun intellectually nor have I ever experienced the bonding that occurred so easily within our group and with the staff.
>
> Betty Hunt
> Letter to Bruce McPherson
> 10/18/87

> After two years, I found the Center profoundly true to its mission to reward outstanding teachers with intellectual stimulation in a physically rewarding setting. Since 1985, the Madison Hall facility has been prepared and it is most comfortable and suited to the purpose. The permanent staff is wonderfully warm and thoughtful and efficient. To me, the Center represents a marvelous phenomenon in which the concrete mirrors the abstract and makes it visible. One's physical needs are taken care of -- wonderful meals and tranquil, comfortable surroundings -- and one's intellectual needs recognized and also wonderfully fed. In that respect, it becomes a metaphor -- a "center" in the truest sense in which we as teachers can reach our own "centers." . . . But the thing most admirable in the concept of the Center is its trust in teachers, something that is becoming ever more rare in the institution of public education. The Center assumes that teachers are intellectually inclined, that they are thinkers, that they are capable and honorable, and it demonstrates these assumptions in its programming and its arrangements. Such an experience can keep a good teacher in the classroom "just one more year."
>
> Dixie Dellinger
> Letter to A.G. Rud
> 8/10/87

I'm still "high" from my week at Cullowhee. The Center is first class, and my experience there is undoubtedly the high point in my professional career. It was uplifting intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

While at the Center, time stood still for me. You all made me feel like I was the most important person in the world.

Dan Jackson
Letter to NCCAT Staff
9/25/87

There are not sufficient words to express our gratitude for this special week. You have given to us the most luxurious and elusive gift a teacher can receive and that gift is time. Time to think and write, research and discover, time to fulfill those personal and professional dreams that have been pushed aside because there was never enough of that empyreal substance.

The depth and quality of your caring has touched us all. None of us has ever experienced anything exactly like this in the sum total of our teaching years! You have made us feel <u>special</u> and many of us will never view ourselves or our honorable profession in quite the same way again.

Participants in the
First Teacher-Scholar In
Residence Program,
NCCAT, Fall, 1987.
Letter to NCCAT Staff
11/13/87

APPENDIX 3

A Taxonomy of NCCAT Thinking Skills and Dispositions

The following is a provisional list of skills or dispositions that we stress to our participants as important to the NCCAT experience:

- listening for the structure of an argument
- giving others time to respond
- respecting silence
- questioning or challenging what the person says, not the person's integrity
- "piggybacking": building upon what another person says
- recognizing what is essential or paradigmatic in discrete or particular facts or anecdotes
- evaluating claims based upon their merit and not their source (particularly apropos of "visiting experts" or other appeals to authority)
- evaluating claims based upon their merit and not the emotional intensity with which they are presented
- asking for clarification of assertions made by participants or presenters
- analyzing the components of a presentation or discussion
- comparing divergent presentations or discussions
- synthesizing the components of a seminar, while also respecting particularity and divergent viewpoints

. striving to find and articulate the theme or steel rod of a seminar

. dwelling with ambiguity and intellectual tension as aspects of a complex mind

References

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